

# The Author's Apology

## For his Book.

WHEN at the first I took my pen in hand  
Thus for to write, I did not understand  
That I at all should make a little book  
In such a mode ; nay, I had undertook  
To make another ; which, when almost done,  
Before I was aware, I this begun.

And thus it was : I, writing of the way  
And race of saints, in this our gospel day,  
Fell suddenly into an allegory  
About their journey, and the way to glory,  
In more than twenty things which I set down.  
This done, I twenty more had in my crown ;  
And they again began to multiply,  
Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.  
Nay, then, thought I, if that you breed so fast  
I'll put you by yourselves, lest you at last  
Should prove *ad infinitum*, and eat out  
The book that I already am about.

Well, so I did ; but yet I did not think  
To show to all the world my pen and ink  
In such a mode ; I only thought to make  
I knew not what : nor did I undertake  
Thereby to please my neighbour : no, not I ;  
I did it my own self to gratify.

Neither did I but vacant seasons spend  
In this my scribble ; nor did I intend  
But to divert myself in doing this  
From worsè thoughts which make me do amiss :

Thus, I set pen to paper with delight,  
And quickly had my thoughts in black and white ;  
For, having now my method by the end,  
Still as I pull'd, it came ; and so I penn'd

It down . until it came at last to be,  
For length and breadth, the bigness which you see.

Well, when I had thus put mine ends together,  
I show'd them others, that I might see whether  
They would condemn them, or them justify :  
And some said, Let them live ; some, Let them die :  
Some said, JOHN, print it ; others said, Not so :  
Some said, It might do good ; others said, No.

Now was I in a strait, and did not see  
Which was the best thing to be done by me :  
At last I thought, Since you are thus divided,  
I print it will, and so the case decided.

For, thought I, some, I see, would have it done,  
Though others in that channel do not run :  
To prove, then, who advisèd for the best,  
Thus I thought fit to put it to the test.

I further thought, if now I did deny  
Those that would have it, thus to gratify ;  
I did not know but hinder them I might  
Of that which would to them be great delight.

For those which were not for its coming forth,  
I said to them, Offend you I am loath,  
Yet, since your brethren pleasèd with it be,  
Forbear to judge till you do further see.

If that thou wilt not read, let it alone ;  
Some love the meat, some love to pick the bone.  
Yea, that I might them better palliate,  
I did too with them thus expostulate :—  
May I not write in such a style as this ?  
In such a method, too, and yet not miss  
My end—thy good ? Why may it not be done ?  
Dark clouds bring waters, when the bright bring none.  
Yea, dark or bright, if they their silver drops  
Cause to descend, the earth, by yielding crops,  
Gives praise to both, and carpeth not at either,  
But treasures up the fruit they yield together ;  
Yea, so commixes both, that in her fruit  
None can distinguish this from that : they suit  
Her well when hungry ; but, if she be full,  
She spews out both, and makes their blessings null

You see the ways the fishermen doth take  
To catch the fish ; what engines doth he make !  
Behold how he engageth all his wits ;  
Also his snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets ;

Yet fish there be, that neither hook nor line,  
Nor snare, nor net, nor engine can make thine :  
They must be groped for, and be tickled too,  
Or they will not be catch'd, whate'er you do.

How does the fowler seek to catch his game  
By divers means ! all which one cannot name :  
His guns, his nets, his lime-twigs, light, and bell ;  
He creeps, he goes, he stands ; yea, who can tell  
Of all his postures ? Yet there's none of these  
Will make him master of what fowls he please.  
Yea, he must pipe and whistle to catch *this* ;  
Yet, if he does so, *that* bird he will miss.

If that a pearl may in a toad's head dwell,  
And may be found too in an oyster-shell ;  
If things that promise nothing do contain  
What better is than gold ; who will disdain,  
That have an inkling of it, there to look,  
That they may find it ? Now, my little book  
(Though void of all these paintings that may make  
It with this or the other man to take)  
Is not without those things that do excel,  
What do in brave but empty notions dwell.

" Well, yet I am not fully satisfied,  
That this your book will stand, when soundly tried."  
Why, what's the matter ? " It is dark." What though ?  
" But it is feignèd." What of that ? I trow  
Some men, by feignèd words, as dark as mine,  
Make truth to spangle and its rays to shine.  
" But they want solidness." Speak, man, thy mind.  
" They drown the weak ; metaphors make us blind."

Solidity, indeed, becomes the pen  
Of him that writeth things divine to men ;  
But must I needs want solidness, because  
By metaphors I speak ? Were not God's laws,  
His gospel laws, in olden times held forth  
By types, shadows, and metaphors ? Yet loath  
Will any sober man be to find fault  
With them, lest he be found for to assault  
The highest wisdom. No, he rather stoops,  
And seeks to find out what by pins and loops,  
By calves and sheep, by heifers and by rams,  
By birds and herbs, and by the blood of lambs,  
God speaketh to him ; and happy is he  
That finds the light and grace that in them be.

Be not too forward, therefore, to conclude  
 That I want solidness—that I am rude ;  
 All things solid in show not solid be ;  
 All things in parables despise not we ;  
 Lest things most hurtful lightly we receive,  
 And things that good are, of our souls bereave.  
 My dark and cloudy words, they do but hold  
 The truth, as cabinets enclose the gold.

The prophets usèd much by metaphors  
 To set forth truth ; yea, who so considers  
 Christ, His apostles too, shall plainly see,  
 That truths to this day in such mantles be.

Am I afraid to say, that holy writ,  
 Which for its style and phrase puts down all wit,  
 Is everywhere so full of all these things—  
 Dark figures, allegories ? Yet there springs  
 From that same book that lustre, and those rays  
 Of light, that turn our darkest nights to days.

Come, let my carper to his life now look,  
 And find there darker lines than in my book  
 He findeth any ; yea, and let him know,  
 That in his best things there are worse lines too.

May we but stand before impartial men,  
 To his poor one I dare adventure ten,  
 That they will take my meaning in these lines  
 Far better than his lies in silver shrines.  
 Come, truth, although in swaddling clouts, I find,  
 Informs the judgment, rectifies the mind ;  
 Pleases the understanding, makes the will  
 Submit ; the memory too it doth fill  
 With what doth our imaginations please :  
 Likewise it tends our troubles to appease.

Sound words, I know, Timothy is of use,  
 And old wives' fables he is to refuse ;  
 But yet grave Paul him nowhere did forbid  
 The use of parables ; in which lay hid  
 That gold, those pearls, and precious stones that were  
 Worth digging for, and that with greatest care.

Let me add one word more. O man of God,  
 Art thou offended ? Dost thou wish I had  
 Put forth my matter in another dress ?  
 Or, that I had in things been more express ?  
 Three things let me propound ; then I submit  
 To those that are my betters. as is fit.

1. I find not that I am denied the use  
Of this my method, so I no abuse  
Put on the words, things, readers ; or be rude  
In handling figure or similitude,  
In application ; but, all that I may,  
Seek the advance of truth this or that way.  
Denied, did I say ? Nay, I have leave  
(Example too, and that from them that have  
God better pleasèd, by their words or ways,  
Than any man that breatheth nowadays)  
Thus to express my mind, thus to declare  
Things unto thee that excellentest are.

2. I find that men (as high as trees) will write  
Dialogue-wise ; yet no man doth them slight  
For writing so : indeed, if they abuse  
Truth, cursèd be they, and the craft they use  
To that intent ; but yet let truth be free  
To make her sallies upon thee and me,  
Which way it pleases God ; for who knows how,  
Better than He that taught us first to plough,  
To guide our mind and pens for His design ?  
And He makes base things usher in divine.

3. I find that holy writ in many places  
Hath semblance with this method, where the cases  
Do call for one thing, to set forth another ;  
Use it I may, then, and yet nothing smother  
Truth's golden beams : nay, by this method may  
Make it cast forth its rays as light as day.

And now before I do put up my pen,  
I'll show the profit of my book, and then  
Commit both thee and it unto that Hand  
That pulls the strong down, and makes weak ones stand

This book it chalketh out before thine eyes  
The man that seeks the everlasting prize ;  
It shows you whence he comes, whither he goes ;  
What he leaves undone, also what he does ;  
It also shows you how he runs and runs,  
Till he unto the gate of glory comes.

It shows, too, who set out for life amain,  
As if the lasting crown they would obtain ;  
Here also you may see the reason why  
They lose their labour, and like fools do die.

This book will make a traveller of thee,  
If by its counsel thou wilt rulèd be.

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It will direct thee to the Holy Land,  
 If thou wilt its directions understand :  
 Yea, it will make the slothful active be ;  
 The blind also delightful things to see.

Art thou for something rare and profitable ?  
 Wouldest thou see a truth within a fable ?  
 Art thou forgetful ? Wouldest thou remember  
 From New Year's Day to the last of December ?  
 Then read my fancies ; they will stick like burs,  
 And may be, to the helpless, comforters.

This book is writ in such a dialect  
 As may the minds of listless men affect :  
 It seems a novelty, and yet contains  
 Nothing but sound and honest gospel strains.

Wouldst thou divert thyself from melancholy ?  
 Wouldst thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly ?  
 Wouldst thou read riddles, and their explanation ?  
 Or else be drownèd in thy contemplation ?  
 Dost thou love picking meat ? Or wouldest thou see  
 A man i' the clouds, and hear him speak to thee ?  
 Wouldst thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep ?  
 Or wouldest thou in a moment laugh and weep ?  
 Wouldest thou lose thyself and catch no harm,  
 And find thyself again without a charm ?  
 Wouldst read thyself, and read thou knowest not what,  
 And yet know whether thou art blest or not,  
 By reading the same lines ?—Oh, then come hither,  
 And lay my book, thy head, and heart together.

JOHN BUNYAN.